Claims:

1. In a process for the preparation of an N-alkyl-acylamino-phenyl-carboxylic acid or carboxylic acid derivative by liquid phase acylation and subsequent N-alkylation of a corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative), the improvement comprising the addition of an alkylating agent to a solution containing the reaction products of said acylation, to effect said N-alkylation.

2. A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) is a compound having a total of three amino and carboxyl groups on the phenyl ring thereof.

3. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) is a triiodophenyl compound.

4. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) is an alkylamino-carbonyl-triiodophenyl compound.

5. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) is a 2,4,6-triiodo-2,5-bis(alkylamino-carbonyl)-aniline.

6. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) is 5-amino-N-N'-bis(2,3-dihydroxypropyl)-2,4,6-triiodophthalamide.

7. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said corresponding amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) contains an alkylaminocarbonyl group carrying one or more hydroxyl groups and containing up to 6 carbon atoms.

8. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said acylation is effected using an acid halide or acetic anhydride.

9. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said alkylating agent is selected from the group consisting of 1-halo-2,3-propanediols, glycidol, 1-halo-3-methoxy-2-propanols, 1,3-halo-2-propanols and epichlorohydrin.

10. A process for the preparation of an N-alkyl-acylamino-phenyl-carboxylic acid or carboxylic acid derivative compound comprising acylating an amino-phenyl-carboxylic acid (or carboxylic acid derivative) in a liquid phase, base hydrolysing the acylated product to remove O-acyl groups from the resulting N-acyl-amino intermediate and, maintaining the liquid phase at a basic pH, N-alkylating said N-acylamino intermediate.

11. A process as claimed in claim 1 ~~or claim 10~~, being a process for the preparation of a contrast agent selected from the group consisting of iomeprol, ioversol, ioxilan, iotrolan, ioxaglate, iodecimol, 2-iopyrol, 2-iopiperidol, iohexol, iopentol and iodixanol.

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